objectives.

The responsible party for performing the seventh principal step may comprise an appropriate project manager. The seventh principal step may receive inputs (e.g., information) from any appropriate area of IT and business (e.g., any appropriate IT or business-related subject matter expert).

The seventh principal step may specifically include seven substeps. The first (1) substep involves validating that the business requirements were met.

The second (2) substep involves identifying best practices and process improvements. Best practices refer to successful features of the current project that another project may want to adopt to improve its chances of success. Process improvements refer to features that could have been incorporated in the IT project to make it more successful.

The third (3) substep involves performing team evaluations. This substep also involves rewarding and recognizing the team for satisfactory or above-average performance.

The fourth (4) substep involves comparing the various aspects of the project plans with the actual realized project. This step may involve determining the extent to which the project deviated from schedules and budgets generated in previous principal steps. This step may also determine the extent to which the quality of the deliverables differ from what was planned.

The fifth (5) substep involves turning over project documentation to an appropriate project management archive within the organization. Project management teams handling future projects may access this archive and extract previous work product for application to their projects.

The sixth (6) substep involves closing out the cost center. The cost center refers to an area of an organization's general ledger where the costs and billing events pertaining to a particular project are recorded. The cost center is "closed out" by no longer permitting additional costs and billing events to be posted in that area.

The seventh (7) substep involves developing and setting up a plan for monitoring the IT product. This may involves monitoring the system, monitoring its benefits, and monitoring its capacity and performance. This substep may also entail

establishing a plan for performing upgrades, backups, export/imports, etc.

The output of the seventh principal step includes one or more of the following deliverables: (1) explanation/documentation of variation of planned product to actual realized product (i.e., planned vs. actual analysis); (2) best practices sharing (e.g., identification and documentation of beneficial features of the project, so that subsequent project managers may learn and optionally adopt these beneficial features in future projects); (3) process improvement opportunities (e.g., identification of ways that the project can be (or could have been improved); (4) relevant project documentation; and (5) a benefits monitoring plan.

The last principal step terminates in approval step 130. This step assesses the viability of the project mainly based on the analysis performed in the seventh principal step. Exemplary authorizing agent(s) for the seventh principal step include: IT solutions delivery personnel and/or strategy and planning personnel. If the authorizing agents approve the project, the process terminates in step 132. If the authorizing agents do not approve the project, then the developers may revise the project.

In summary, the above-described process applies a highly structured approach to developing an IT project. This improves the efficiency of the development process and potentially reduces the chances of its failure. The use of approval procedures (i.e., approval "gates") throughout the development process is particularly beneficial in identifying obstacles in the development process in a timely manner. In contrast, the prior unstructured approach typically identified these obstacles only when they were directly confronted in a late stage in the project's implementation.

2. Exemplary Implementation of Technique

The above-described process can be implemented in various ways. In general terms, the process is implemented by supplying appropriate responsible parties with information that describes the structured development process. The information may contain first data that identifies the principal steps, second data that identifies the substeps contained in each principal step, and third data describing the approval procedures. The developer accesses the information and then performs the principal steps, substeps, and approval procedures described therein.

FIG. 2 describes one exemplary system 200 for implementing the process using a standalone computer and/or a group of computers connected to a network. The system 200 preferably includes at least one computer, such as computer 230. The computer 230 may include any general or special purpose computer. It includes conventional hardware components, including processor 220. The processor 220 is connected to random access memory (RAM) 224, read only memory (ROM) 226, and storage device 228 via bus 234. The computer receives input data from input device(s) 232, and supplies output to rendering device(s) 233, such as a display. In addition, or alternatively, the computer 230 can send its output to a printer (not shown). The input device(s) 232 and rendering device(s) 233 together define an interface unit 231.

Computer 230 may comprise any known type of computer. The computer may operate using any one of a variety of operating programs, such as the Microsoft Windows™ 98 program. The storage device 228 may include any storage, such as a hard drive, a CDROM, an optical disc, etc.

The computer 230 may comprise a standalone computer (i.e., a computer which does not communicate with a network). In other embodiments, the computer 230 is communicatively coupled using communication interface 222 to other computers (e.g., computer 232 and 234) via network 204. The network 204 can be formed as an intranet, a Personal Area Network (PAN), a Local Area Network (LAN), a Wide Area Network (WAN), a Metropolitan Area Network (MAN), or other type of network. The network 204 may alternatively use wireless technology to connect computers together. The computer 230 can also communicate with the Internet 206 via Internet Service Provider (ISP) 208, and any additional computers (e.g., computers 272 and 274) connected thereto. The networks may link users involved in the development process, such as members of the project management team, authorizing agents, etc.

The network can operate using any network-enabled code, such as Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), Dynamic HTML, Extensible Markup Language (XML), Extensible Stylesheet Language (XSL), Document Style Semantics and Specification Language (DSSSL), Java™, etc.